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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine which strategies and interventions used by high school counselors to assist students in the college-choice process were perceived by the students as most helpful. Specifically, this study identified the perceptions of students in a middle-income, small city high school. Subjects (N=57) were members of a senior class currently enrolled in an Advanced Placement English class. A wide range of activities and resources designed to assist the college-selection process were made available to assist these students over the period of high school attendance. Data were collected using a questionnaire. Each student was asked to rate various college selection materials and strategies used by the counselor to augment the college-selection process of the students. These students were also asked to evaluate the guidance reference room provided and the services of the counselor. A majority of the students indicated that they were satisfied or more than satisfied with the services provided by the guidance counselor in their college-search activities. The guidance reference room was also widely used and found to be more than satisfactory by 64.8% of the students in the survey. The most helpful resource in facilitating the college-choice decision was indicated by the respondents to be the college visit. The least helpful resource ranked by the students was individual conferences with classroom teachers. (Contains 32 references.) (ABL)

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THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

THE COLLEGE-CHOICE PROCESS FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS: AN EVALUATION OF HIGH SCHOOL COUNSELOR INTERVENTIONS AND STRATEGIES

by

MARTHA S. RAY

A Reseach Project submitted to the
Department of Human Services and Studies
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Educational Specialist

Degree Awarded:
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The members of the Committee approve the Research Project of Martha S. Ray defended on May 25, 1992.

_____

James P. Sampson Jr.
Directing Professor

_____

Gary W. Peterson
Committee Member

_____

Robert C. Reardon
Committee Member

ABSTRACT

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to determine which stategies and interventions used by high school counselors to assist students in the college-choice process were perceived by the students as most helpful in aiding in their college selection endeavors. Specifically, this study identified the perceptions of students in a middle-income, small city high school.

Procedures: The group of subjects selected for the study were fifty-seven members of the senior class at Leon High School in Tallahassee, Florida, currently enrolled in an Advanced Placement English class. A wide range of activites and resources designed to assist the college-selection process have been made available to these students over the period of high school attendence.

The data were collected using a questionnaire. Each student was asked to rank various college selection materials and stategies used by the counselor to augment the college-selection process of students. These students were also asked to evaluate the guidance reference room provided and the services of the counselor. Results: A majority of the students (90%) indicated being satisfied or more than satisfied with the services provided by the guidance counselor in their college-search activities. The guidance reference room was also widely used and found to

be more than satisfactory by 64.8% of the students in the survey.

The most helpful resource in facilitating the college-choice decision was indicated by the respondents to be the college visit. The least helpful resource ranked by the students was individual conferences with classroom teachers. Although college generated literature was used most often, it was not ranked on the helpfulness factor to be the most helpful of the resources used.

Recommendations generated from the data indicate that more emphasis placed on use of technological tools such as computer searches and videos may boost the students' perception of the helpfulness of these resources. College visits should be encouraged more by the counselor. Opportunities for students to make visits to colleges warrant being integrated into the high school guidance plan. Strategies for enlisting more involvement from teachers in the college-search activities of the students could significantly augment the services provided by the high school in the area of college-selection assistance.

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Establishing high standards of achievement and having faith that one's students can reach these goals are characteristics I have always admired in my teachers. I sincerely appreciate the challenges which have been placed before me in completing this project, and most of all I appreciate the faith that I could achieve what was expected. Specifically, I would like to thank Dr. Jim Sampson for accommodating my questions and frustrations in completing this task. His patience, understanding and flexibility made it possible for me to do what I often felt was an impossible accomplishment. Also in the special category of thanks is Dr. Gary Peterson, whose determination, confidence, good humor and dedicated manner motivated my persistence throughout the entire program.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

One of the significant tasks of the high school counselor is to facilitate students' goal orientation for their postsecondary plans and aid them in implementing these plans (Chapman & De Masi, 1985; Johnson, Stewart, & Eberly, 1991; Matthay, 1989; Rowe, 1989). The transition from high school to college often represents the first time a complex decision of major importance and consequence is made by many young people (Lewis & Morrison, 1975 cited in Litten, 1982). This is a decision that can have life long ramifications for the decision maker (Kocher & Pascarella, 1990). The outcome of this decision can also have important influences on the school, the community, and the nation (Boyer, 1987; Caine, 1982). A successful college experience offers the individual the opportunity to refine essential qualities of mind and character to fulfill the need for well-informed, inquisitive, open-minded and productive citizens. Society at large is enhanced by educated citizens who are contributing members, not only in their chosen career, but in social and civic situations as well.

Schools are under increasing accountability expectations in order to meet the demands from parents, the community, and the nation for educationally prepared citizens (Hutchinson

& Bottorff, 1986). Present statistics indicate that fifty percent of students entering college drop out, transfer, or have their education interrupted in some fashion (Boyer, 1987). This is a large proportion of able students meeting with frustration and failure in their educational progress, which not only interferes with the students lives and productivity, but also produces a strain on society at large.

Helping students find success in their college choice is an important function of the school counselor (Reiss & Fox, 1968). The accuracy and quality of college imformation provided by the school counselor for the high school student can make the selection process easier, enable more appropriate choices, and instill more confidence in the students to help insure a more successful transition to postsecondary education.

The time and efforts of the high school counselor is limited on the amount that can be dedicated to helping students make what could be one of the most important decisions of their lives. College advising is but one of many roles and responsibilites of the counselor.

Most of the school counselor's knowledge of the college selection process comes from on-the-job experience and from personal experience with the college selection process themselves (Matthay, 1989). Little, if any emphasis is placed on this important function in counselor training

programs. The skill and expertise of the counselor in college advising is left up to the initiative of the individual counselor for the most part, to discern the method by which this important task will be approached.

A variety of approaches are used by the counselors to supply the needed information and facilitate the college-choice process of students. Large caseloads and varied task assignments challenge high school counselors in many ways to meet the needs of their students. The crucial issue for the school counselor presented here is to identify efficient and comprehensive methods with which to enable high school counselors to meet this challenge of helping students make their college-choice decision. A decision which is often the first one of major consequence in the students' lives, with the outcome affecting not only the decision maker but their community and their nation.

In reviewing the literature, research indicates that high school counselors do not feel as if they are spending the amount of time necessary to help students thoroughly enough in the college-choice process (Holmes, Dalton, Erdman, Hayden, & Roberts, 1986). How helpful students find their counselor in regards to college choice assistance is another point of concern that has motivated this study.

Significance of the Study

Choosing a college is a major decision which can have long-term effects on the future life of the decision maker. It is a decision which may determine whether one is a success or a failure at the institution of their choice, whom one marries, and the job prospects one receives (Brodbelt, 1982). Success in making a satisfactory college choice enhances the student's chances of completing a degree and becoming a more educated and productive adult.

The difficulty in making the choice of a college or university to attend is great. There are thousands of choices available and often the student turns to the high school counselor for advice.

Recent college-choice models specify three stages in the formulating of a college choice decision. The model derived by Hossler and Gallagher (1987) defines the college-choice process as consisting of the following three stages. Stage one is the predisposition stage in which students determine their aspirations to continue their formal education after high school. Although some counselor intervention may influence this decision, parents seem to be the major impetus at this stage (Stage & Hossler, 1989). Stage two is the search stage in which students consider the type of postsecondary institution they wish to apply. This is the

stage in which the school counselor's skills and expertise can prove most helpful and where most counselor intervention occurs. Stage three is the choice stage in which the selection of an institution to attend is made.

Counselors should be interested in this study in order to help them examine the efficacy of their own efforts in the college-search process of their students. By identifying which resources the students find most helpful in facilitating the college decision process, counselors can focus their efforts in a more productive and efficient manner. Counselors may also use the results of the study to develop a more effective plan for college advising in the high school. With most high school counselors having numerous students in their case load and many assigned tasks in addition to providing help in college selection, pertinence of effort is of the essence.

College recruitment offices may also find the results of the study of importance in planning their recruitment activities. Their success in making a good student-to-college match helps insure the success of their efforts and the success of their college or university.

Statement of the Problem

Making the decision concerning which college to attend is often the first major decision with which students are faced which can have enduring effects on their future. The high school counselor is frequently called upon to help these students with the decision-making process. These same counselors are often dealing with various other tasks and assignments and with large numbers of students to assist. By identifying the techniques and resources which students find most helpful in this decision-making process, counselors can better focus their efforts in regards to this important aspect of their postition and the students will derive more satisfactory results from their decisions.

Research Questions

As indicated by research in the area of college choice, many high school students are influenced by their high school counselors regarding their decision on what college or university they will attend after graduation.

This study was conducted to provide data to answer the following questions:

1. What do Leon High School students consider to be the most helpful resources and interventions provided by

the high school counselor to facilitate their college choice?

2. To what extent are Leon High School students satisfied with the counseling services provided for them which are aimed at assisting in the college-choice process?

Basic Assumptions

1. That the students who responded to the questionnaire were representative of the college-bound population at Leon High School.
2. That the students who responded to the questionnaire understood the terminology used therein.
3. That the students responded to the questionnaire with positive motivation.
4. That the questionnaire design was such that the interventions to be measured were indeed measured.
5. That Leon High School is representative of other middle-income, small city high schools.

Limitations of the Study

1. The population studied did not include non-college

bound students.

2. The questionnaire was administered during class time. Some students may have spent too little time thinking completely through responses in order to finish assignments.
3. There is the potential for experimenter bias because of this being a self-study.

Definition of Terms

1. College-choice set--a group of institutions which a student has decided to seek application and include in the final decision of where to matriculate.
2. Postsecondary institution--an educational institution designed to provide additional educational opportunities for high school graduates.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Educated citizens are the backbone of a productive and well adjusted society. Successful school experiences help insure that the student will continue educational pursuits and thus contribute to society as an informed and productive citizen. An important factor in meeting with success on the postsecondary level is in the selection of an appropriate institution of higher learning.

The decision to continue one's education after high school graduation is normally made while a person is in high school. It is the role of the high school counselor to intervene in this decision-making process and provide the needed assistance in order for the student to make an informed choice, a choice which is of profound importance to the decision maker (Miller, 1990).

Assisting students' college choice is but one of many tasks assigned high school counselors. In many high schools, the counselor is not only challenged with multiple job functions, each of significance, case loads of assigned students often fall in the range of three hundred to five hundred students per counselor. It is therefore of extreme importance that the counselor understand the college-choice

process and employ practices which will assist students in as an effective manner as possible.

This review of the literature is organized in the following manner: (1) conceptual frameworks for a college-choice model; (2) the importance of appropriate college-choice decisions; (3) the high school counselor's responsibility in the college-choice process; and (4) sources of information and the college-choice process.

Conceptual Framework for a College Choice Model

The college-selection process includes a complex series of decisions and activities. The model derived by Hossler and Gallagher (1987) defines the college-choice process as consisting of three stages: predisposition, search, and choice. It is a developmental model in which students progress toward an increased understanding of their educational options as they seek to define their postsecondary experiences. At each phase of the college-choice process, outcomes are influenced by the interaction of individual and organizational factors.

In the predisposition phase, students determine whether or not to continue educational pursuits after high school. This decision is affected by such influential factors as socio-economic level, intellectual ability and achievment,

parental encouragement, participation in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, and the quality of the high school curricula available to them.

The school counselor can participate in the predisposition phase to foster college choice indirectly by encouraging both students and parents to participate fully in the high school experience. As a faculty member, the counselor can interact professionally to implement course offerings and student activities which will increase the likelihood of students choosing to continue their education after high school graduation.

In the search stage, students initiate the decision-making process of selecting the type of postsecondary institution to which they plan to attend. This is the stage in which the school counselor's skills and expertise can prove most helpful and where most counselor intervention occurs. Through self evaluation, students are challenged to determine their personal and educational needs. A choice set of institutions to which applications will be submitted must be determined. The determination of the choice set can involve a great deal of research into the available options and which of those options match with the individual's own personal and educational needs.

The counselor's responsibilities in this stage are paramount. It is important that a wide range of resources be

made available to students and parents to facilitate the search. The counselor should also provide direction and information in a knowledgeable manner. It is important for the counselor to become as familiar as possible with the student conducting the search and with the institutions which are possible choice options.

After the search phase, the student moves into the choice phase. In this phase the choice set is evaluated and a final decision of choice is derived. The counselor's role at this point is to continue to facilitate the student's decision-making skills by providing guidance and information necessary for an appropriate and satisfying outcome. The counselor is also called upon at this phase to act as a liason between the student and the colleges and universities.

The high school counselor can serve as the key link in all phases of the college choice process. Carefully planned interventions and a knowledge of the college-choice process can enable counselors to implement a college-counseling program in the high school which can serve to encourage more students to choose postsecondary options and to increase the student's satisfaction with their selection. This in turn will likely lead to a better educated citizenry and enhance both the future of the student and the future of the community and nation.

The Importance of Appropriate College-Choice Decisions

Studies by Featherman and Carter (1976), Gaither and Dukes (1982), Kocher and Pascarella (1990), and Robertshaw and Wolfle (1983) show that delays on entering college or interruptions in a person's college attendence negatively influence the number of years of college a student completes. The length of postsecondary educational pursuits is closely associated with an uninterrupted sequence from beginning to end (Ford & Urban, 1966). According to Cope (1975) more than fifty percent of entering college freshmen will leave their colleges before graduating. Tinto (1987) estimated that sixteen percent of all four-year college students transfer at least once within the first two years of initiating enrollment. This data suggested that large numbers of high school students seeking to make successful college choices are making decisions which are not appropriate and are jeopardizing their overall chances of fulfilling their postsecondary plans.

The consequences of poor college choice are serious. In addition to negatively influencing educational attainment, research by Kocher and Pascarella (1990) showed that lack of continuity in one's college education has negative effects on future occupational status and income. These effects were even more significant for African-American students.

Not all students leave their college due to dissatisfaction with their choice. However, a significant number seem to do so. Almost half of those surveyed by Panos and Astin (1967) indicated dissatisfaction with the institution which they were attending as the reason for leaving.

Having the responsibility and expertise to assist students in making college decisions puts high school counselors in a crucial position to affect the welfare of the college-bound student (Johnson, Stewart, & Eberly, 1991). Guidance programs for these students should make every effort to be as comprehensive and as effective as possible.

The High School Counselor's Responsibility in the College-Choice Process of Students

Jean Reiss and Mildred Fox (1967) developed the following job description for counselors in the area of specific responsibilities for guiding future college students:

I. Services to Students

   A. Helping students gain an understanding of themselves through a knowledge of their abilities, aptitudes, achievements, interests, and ambitions so that they may realize their potential.

B. Aiding students in the decision-making process.

C. Encouraging students to explore the many career and college opportunities open to them.

D. Assisting students to obtain and use information which will contribute to their ability to make realistic choices of educational institutions and possible future plans.

II. Services to Parents

A. Increasing parents' understanding of their children's capabilities, limitations, and desires.

B. Helping parents as they investigate colleges which might prove suitable for their children.

C. Explaining admissions standards and requirements to parents as they relate to their children.

D. Informing parents about college costs and ways in which costs can be met.

III. Services to the School Staff

A. Helping staff members learn more about individual colleges, especially those new to them.

B. Keeping staff up-to-date on what is happening in specific colleges.

C. Helping staff understand admissions standards and requirements as they relate to individual students who may need or want direction and recommendations

from them.

D. Helping staff identify talented students and encourage the development of student abilities to maximum potential.

E. Helping the school librarian build a collection of basic career and college guidance books for students, parents, and staff; keep an up-to-date collection of catalogues and viewbooks of many colleges; and secure audio-visual aids.

IV. Services to College Admissions Officers

A. Scheduling, planning, and conducting admissions officers' visits to the high school.

B. Arranging for admissions officers to meet with groups of students and with individual students.

C. Sharing information about the students, the school, and community.

D. Working to develop a cooperative relationship through mutual respect and trust.

V. Services to Local College Alumni

A. Working with official, local alumni as they try to assist their colleges in identifying students who will be able to meet their admission requirements and achieve success in their colleges.

B. Learning more about their colleges from these local alumni.

VI. Acquiring Knowledge about School and Community

A. School: philosophy of education, curricular and extra-curricular offerings, staff, marking system, guidance programs, physical plant and facilities.

B. Home background of students: education of parents, occupations of parents, family income, size of families, parental aspirations for their children, ethnic and/or religious affiliations.

C. Community: Cultural, economic, social, and educational public relations.

VII. Accumulating Information about Each Student

A. Academic program with designation of courses, such as Advanced Placement Program, Honors, Accelerated, General, or Basic.

B. Grades earned.

C. Test results: ability, achievement, aptitude, interests.

D. Personal data: activity in and out of school, special skills and talents, travel and other opportunities for personal and cultural development, work experience, future educational and career plans, socio-economic family background, personality and behavior ratings.

E. Anecdotal records including staff comments, observations and recommendations.

F. Report of conferences which have been held with the student, the parents, and other concerned people.

VIII. Acquiring Knowledge about the Services and Programs Available to Youth

A. Scholarship and loan programs: local, state, regional, and national.

B. Specialized schools: business-secretarial, art, music, drama, nursing, trade, vocational, etc.

C. Local employment opportunities, both part-time and during the summer.

D. Employment opportunities in other parts of the country and abroad during the summer months.

E. Local summer school programs in schools and colleges.

F. Summer institutes for academically-talented youth offered by colleges, universities, and private groups.

G. Special study opportunities during the summer months in other parts of the country and abroad.

H. Travel possibilities for students.

IX. Accumulating Information about Colleges

A. Through literature: reference books, college publications, (catalogues, viewbooks, alumni magazines, etc.), professional journals, films,

recordings, and other audio-visual materials.

B. Through interviews with school graduates who are attending college when they are home for vacation, and through conferences with current students who have visited campuses.

C. Through interviews with admissions officers when they visit the school.

D. Through records maintained on each college where graduates have matriculated, including data on the programs of each student.

E. Through follow-up studies and other research.

F. Through records kept of the current admission picture of each graduating class.

G. Through attendance at conferences sponsored by colleges, universities, and professional organizations.

H. Through visits to colleges to gain first-hand information and to develop a wider knowledge of many colleges.

I. Through sharing information and techniques with colleagues from other secondary schools.

X. Coordinating a Program of College Preparation and Orientation to College

A. Publications such as bulletins, letters, and guides, made available to students and parents.

B. Group guidance activities for students and parents pertaining to college admissions and related topics.

C. In-service training activities for administrators, counselors, and teachers.

XI. Understanding the Admissions Process and Directing Admissions Procedures

A. Giving information relative to the admissions process: admissions standards in specific colleges, application deadlines, tests required, test registration deadlines, etc.

B. Answering students' questions about college application forms.

C. Preparing student transcripts and interpretative materials.

D. Writing student recommendations.

E. Completing the parts of college application forms which are required from the high school.

F. Securing additional personal data to supplement each students' credentials.

G. Providing information on scholarships, grants, loans, and work/study opportunities.

XII. Testing

A. Orientation of students and parents concerning tests required for admission to college.

B. Informing students and parents of tests required for entrance to specific colleges.

C. Informing students and parents of registration deadlines, test dates, and locations.

D. Supervising, administering, and coordinating test programs which are vital to college admission, scholarship aid, advanced placement, and credit in college level courses such as:

1. Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test
2. College Entrance Examination Board Tests
3. American College Testing Program
4. Advanced Placement Tests
5. Other state, regional, and national tests

E. Utilizing internal testing program of school to guide students in educational planning and career/college choice.

XIII. Maintaining Records of the Admissions Picture for the Current Senior Class

A. Applications made and the date of each.

B. Acceptances received.

C. Rejections received.

D. Number of students placed on waiting lists.

E. Scholarship offers and acceptances.

F. Number of college bound students.

G. Number and names of colleges which members of each

class will attend.

H. Geographical spread of college attendance of each class.

XIV. Conducting Follow-up Studies and Other Research Each Year

A. College

1. Percent attending college.

2. Number of colleges attended.

3. Number attending each college.

B. Specialized education and training

C. Other

1. Work

2. Military Service

3. Undecided

D. Drop-outs

XV. Assisting in Curriculum Development

A. Acquiring a comprehensive view of the educational program with appreciation and understanding of the course offerings in all departments.

B. Maintaining a longitudinal view of educational programs and keeping abreast of current curriculum development in progressive schools everywhere.

C. Realizing the importance of making recommendations for the improvement of curricular offerings to meet the needs of students.

D. Reporting on innovations gleaned from reading, professional meetings, and visits to other schools, which might be incorporated into the local school program.

E. Assisting in gathering statistical data necessary for curricular development and improvement.

F. Serving as a member of the curriculum planning and revision committees.

XVI. Assisting in Research

A. Gathering data for research projects as needed by the school system.

B. Recommending research projects believed to be fundamental to the development of the total school program.

C. Completing studies of graduates which determine academic achievement in colleges and universities and therefore gauge the adequacy of the academic program of the local secondary school system.

D. Doing various types of follow-up studies of graduates to ascertain their success in later life.

XVII. Promoting Good Public Relations

A. Establishing personal contacts with many college admissions officers and local college alumni with the purpose of developing effective communication and cooperative working relationships.

B. Allotting time for luncheons, dinners, teas, and other activities sponsored by local college alumni and/or representativies.

C. Attending meetings outside of school designed to aid parents in their search for information and advice on college admissions.

D. Maintaining active memberships in professional associations, especially those whose primary concern is the transition of students from high school to college, and attending local, state, regional, and national professional meetings whenever possible.

E. Interpreting the school and community to representatives of educational institutions, business, industry, etc.

F. Assisting the administrative staff in their endeavors to interpret the effectiveness of the educational program to the Board of Education and to the total community.

Although this outline of counselors' responsibilities was presented a number of years ago, it continues to be applicable today. It is a comprehensive statement which serves to point out the intricacies of the high school counselor's role in college advising.

The counselor's role in assisting students with the

college choice process affects large numbers of students. In 1990, over 2.4 million students graduated from high school in the United States with approximately fifty-nine percent of these going directly to college (Healy, 1991). It has been documented in research studies (Boyer, 1987; Chapman, 1981; Chapman, O'Brien, & DeMasi, 1987; "How do students", 1986; Hutchinson & Reagan, 1989; Johnson, Stewart, & Eberly, 1991; Litten, 1991; Matthay, 1989; Tillery, 1973) that high school counselors play an important role in influencing the decision of which institution to attend after high school completion.

In research conducted by Litten (1982) it was found that students whose parents had not attended college were more likely to seek the guidance of a high school counselor for information on colleges than those whose parents had attended college.

Engen, Laing, and Sawyer (1988) compiled information from responses given on the student profile section of the ACT over a period of years ranging from 1973 to 1984. When asked if schools had provided the respondents with counseling that had helped them continue their education, forty-eight percent of the class of 1974 reported being satisfied. The satisfaction percentage for this question has steadily risen over the years and was at a fifty-nine percent satisfaction rate for the class of 1984.

Comparisons of different studies designed to identify

for students deciding on a college. Counselors were ranked evenly with parents and family in regards to the degree of help provided.

Two recent studies indicated that approximately three-fourths of college-bound students sought information from their high school counselor ("How do students", 1986; Hutchinson & Bottorff, 1986). Seventy percent of those surveyed by the Carnegie Foundation rated the information provided by the counselor as accurate. In the latter study, only fifty-nine percent indicated receiving needed services. Chapman et al. (1987), found that ninety-two percent of their sample of students from low-income families reported using a high school counselor as a source of information. A significant number of these same students reported that they did not perceive the counselor as effective in providing college advising.

Chapman and DeMasi (1984) conducted a survey among counselors to determine the amount of time devoted to college advising. The counselors reported spending twenty percent of their time dedicated to college advising but indicating that at least a twenty-two percent allotment of time was needed in order to provide adequate services in this area. These same counselors reported that the greatest problems relating to college advising tend to be centered around keeping accurate information about different colleges' programs, admissions

requirements, and advising students and parents on financial aid. Boyer (1987) confirmed the findings that counselors were under-informed on information in regards to college counseling.

School counselors are faced with many tasks and duties. At Leon High School the counselors' job description includes the following:

1. Helps to plan and develop the guidance program and curriculum in relation to the needs of pupils.
2. Provides all pupils with the opportunity for individual or small group counseling.
3. Assumes primary responsibility for the school's program of pupil appraisal by helping to identify pupils with special abilities or needs and by interpreting information about pupils to them, to their parents, to teachers and to others who are professionally concerned.
4. Collects and disseminates to pupils and their parents information concerning school offerings, opportunities for further education, careers, and career training opportunities.
5. Maintains liason and cooperative working relationships with other pupil personnel specialists and with agencies in the community.
6. Assists in providing placement services for pupils

by helping pupils to develop long range plans of study and to make appropriate choices of school programs.

7. Consults with parents regarding the growth and development of their children (with due regard for the pupils desire for confidentiality).
8. Assists teachers in securing materials and developing procedures for a variety of classroom group guidance experiences.
9. Cooperates with others in conducting research related to pupil needs and how well school services are meeting those needs.

The Guidance Office at Leon High School offers a variety of services to help guide students through the college-selection process. These services include the following:

1. Yearly classroom visits to present grade-appropriate college information and descriptions of the services available in the guidance office.
2. Individual student and parent conferences available upon request.
3. Timely advice on college-selection topics in the parent newsletter published every six weeks and in school newspaper.
4. Up-to-date information on application deadlines, college conference dates, and financial aid and

scholarships on a recorded school information telephone line.

5. Parent nights with guest speakers or parent/counselor panels on various topics related to the college-selection process and financial aid.
6. Copies of The College Times published by the College Board for all students taking the PSAT and for handing out to parents at parent meetings.
7. After school seminars on how to choose a college, financial aid, filling out your college application, and how to write applications essays.
8. Applications for SAT and ACT and test preparation materials.
9. Newsletter prepared for each grade level with advice on college planning.
10. A reference library of current college catalogs, a variety of other college selection related books, scholarship and financial aid books, and pamphlets on filling out applications, making college visits, and writing application essays.
11. Computer resources including CHOICES and College Explorer.
12. Files with up-to-date college brochures and applications.

13. Yearly college night coordinated with other area high schools.
14. Conferences with college representatives.
15. A video tape library on colleges, college selection, applications, and entrance exams. A television and VCR are located in the guidance reference room.
16. A senior handbook with specific college selection, application and financial aide information distributed to each senior.

These activites are designed to involve the student early and throughout the high school experience in the college-search process. In addition to these direct services to students, the counselor is involved in many behind-the-scenes activities as described in the Reiss and Fox statement.

Holmes et al. (1986) in the report of the National College Counseling Project, found that the counselors in their survey most frequently identified lack of sufficient time to get to know students, to engage in creative planning, and carry out effective college counseling as major problem areas in their role as college advisor.

The time frame that counselors are afforded to make interventions in the college-choice process of students is

very narrow. Most of the activity is confined to parts of the junior and senior year of high school (Johnson, Stewart, & Eberly 1991). Having such a short span of time to assist large numbers of students in making an extremely important decision is an awesome responsibility.

Sources of Information and the College-Choice Process

The Carnegie Foundation (Boyer, 1987) surveyed prospective college students in December of the senior year. Of those interviewed, half of them reported needing more information in order to make a college choice. Without adequate information, poor decisions may result. In this same survey it was found that these students found college visits, college fairs, and commercial college guides such as The College Handbook published by The College Board to be the most helpful resources in providing information upon which to base a decision of college choice. Material distributed by the individual colleges were somewhat helpful, however, forty percent responded that this type of information does not tell you what is really important about the college.

Printed materials from colleges do not seem to be as important to prospective students as counselors may think, according to Chapman and Johnson (1979). Indeed, in another study by the same authors (Johnson & Chapman, 1979) it was

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found that the reading level of college-prepared literature was too difficult and the terminology not understandable by most high school students.

Research by Matthay (1989) ranked the helpfulness of resources used by college students at the high school level to make the decision on which college to attend. Visits to colleges ranked first among the choices presented, followed in order by college catalogs, meeting with college representatives, college guides and directories, college fairs, films or tapes on specific colleges, films or tapes on general college information, and computer information programs.

The Carnegie Foundation ("How do students", 1986) concluded similar rankings with college visits ranked most important in influencing college decisions followed by college publications, meetings with college representatives, and comparative guides to colleges.

In the report, Frontiers of Possibility, Holmes et al. (1986) surveyed high schools across the country to determine the extent of college-choice resources available for student use in high schools. Ninety-eight percent reported the presence of a college resource reference library, ninety-seven percent offer visits by college representatives to their students, eighty-one percent have a college fair or college night, fourty-four percent reported providing

computerized college information and eighteen percent had video-taped materials.

Summary

The literature reveals the fact that high school counselors play a very important role in influencing the college-choice decisions of students. Students frequently look to the counselor for information and advice in making this decision. The counselor, however, has many roles and responsibilities which hinder their devoting the time and energy necessary to provide students with the expertise and attention needed. This situation may be partially responsible for many students making inappropriate choices.

Sparse research into the resources available for college advising and the usefulness of these resources to high school students has been attempted. Due to the scanty existing research in this area, counselors must rely largely on intuition and experience to make judgements as to how to approach the college-advising process with students.

There is currently a gap between what information and guidance students need in order to make a successful college choice and what is being provided by the school counseling profession and the secondary education system in the United States.

In order to better serve students in the process of choosing a college, counselors need to familiarize themselves more adequately with the services provided by school guidance programs which the students find most helpful in assisting them in the college-choice process.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODS

Introduction

This study was designed to offer data for the high school counselor and interested others in regards to the college-choice process of high school students. The specific research questions addressed in this study were:

1. What do Leon High School students consider to be the most helpful resources and interventions provided by the high school counselor to facilitate their college choice?
2. To what extent are Leon High school students satisfied with the counseling services provided for them which are aimed at assisting in the college-choice process?

A one group post-test exploratory research design was employed for this study. An instrument was developed specifically for this study using a Likert-type scale to determine which interventions were used and if used, to what degree of helpfulness they were perceived as being by the subjects. The instrument design was compared to other similar instruments (Matthay, 1989; Holmes, Dalton, Erdman, Hayden, & Roberts, 1986). Guidance for development was also

offered by a local expert in measurement.

Independent and Dependent Variables of the Study

The independent variables in this study relate to the program devised for the students to familiarize them with the various aspects of the college-choice process and to prompt them to incorporate these aspects into their decision-making efforts to select a college. Specific activities of the counselor are described in the procedures portion of this chapter.

The dependent variables prompting the development of this study concern the student perceptions of the most helpful resources provided by the counselor in the college-choice process and the students' perceived satisfaction with the counselors services.

Selection of Subjects

The subjects selected for incorporation in this study were members of the senior class of 1991 at Leon High School enrolled in Advanced Placement English classes. Advanced Placement English is usually selected by students whose intentions are to receive credit towards their college

requirements for freshman English. These are also the students most likely to be concerned about and have the option for making a decision about which college they will attend. During the 1990-91 school year, sixty-one students were enrolled in the AP English classes at Leon High School. Fifty-seven students completed the questionnaire which represent thirty-nine percent of the senior population at Leon whose intentions are to attend a four-year college or university after graduation from high school.

In the sample, fifty percent of the respondents indicated they were male and fifty percent indicated being female. Three students did not indicate gender on the questionnaire. Fourteen percent of the subjects responding listed their race as African-American and eighty-one percent listed their race as caucasian. Five percent did not respond to the race question. All subjects were age 17 to 18 years old.

Leon High School is a public four-year high school located in Tallahassee, Florida. Tallahassee's population numbers approximately one hundred fifty thousand residents and is the capitol of the state of Florida. It is also the home of Florida State University and Florida A&M University. The two largest employers in the area are state government and the university system.

Leon High School is Florida's oldest continually accredited high school, originally founded in 1881. Leon has

been fully accredited since 1916. The student enrollment numbers eighteen hundred ninth through twelfth graders with three hundred forty-three seniors graduating in the class of 1991. Minority students make up fifteen percent of the senior class. Leon was selected for this study because it closely fits the profile of a middle income, small city school in regards to senior class size and the percent of seniors attending college.

With a student body of over eighteen hundred and a counseling staff of four, the ratio of counselors to students is one counselor serving approximately four hundred fifty students. In recent years, the college-bound population at Leon High School has ranged from seventy-five percent to seventy-nine percent of the entire student population.

The postsecondary educational plans of the senior class of 1991 indicated that forty-five percent intended to attend a four-year college or university. Thirty percent of the class indicated plans to attend a two-year college after high school graduation. Three percent of the class had plans to attend trade and technical schools.

The average SAT score for the class of 1991, with two hundred twenty-six students attempting the test, was nine hundred eighty-three points. This average was eighty-seven points higher than the national average. One hundred thirty-two students attempted the ACT and had an average composite score of twenty-one and nine-tenths.

The academic environment at Leon High School challenges its students and offers Advanced Placement classes in English, calculus, Latin, american history, economics, and chemistry. Extension courses from Tallahassee Community College are offered on the high school campus in freshman English, american musical theater, and world civilizations. Students may dual enroll in classes at Tallahassee Community College, Florida State University, and Florida A&M University if they have completed all available coursework at Leon. Class fees and books are furnished at no cost to the student.

Instrumentation

In the questionnaire designed for this study, efforts were made to ask questions which were pertinent to the interventions available at Leon High School to assist students in their choice of college.

The respondents were asked to rank eighteen intervention possibilities. A rating of 0 indicated that the intervention was not used, 1 indicated that it was used but was not found to be helpful in making a college-choice decision, 2 indicated the intervention to be somewhat helpful, 3 indicated the intervention to be helpful, 4 indicated the intervention to be quite helpful, and 5 indicated the intervention to be extremely helpful.

The respondents were also asked to rate their

satisfaction with the resources in the guidance reference room and the services of the guidance counselor. A rating of 0 indicated that the resource or service was not used, 1 indicated use but not satisfaction, 2 indicated that the resource was somewhat satisfactory, 3 indicated that the resource was satisfactory, 4 indicated that the resource was quite satisfactory, and 5 indicated that the resource was extremely satisfactory.

Procedures

The subjects responding to the dependent measure were assigned to the evaluator upon entering Leon High School as ninth graders. The evaluator served in the capacity of guidance counselor in this assignment. Each subsequent year the evaluator has been assigned as counselor to this group, serving them for the four years of high school attendence. The measure was administered during the week prior to graduation when it was most likely to indicate final decisions of college choice.

The intervention timeline was as follows:

First semester ninth grade

--classroom visit to introduce guidance services available to students and parents, grading policies, graduation requirements, and college entrance requirements.

--individual conferences upon request with students and

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parents.

Second semester ninth grade

--classroom visit to discuss career planning and develop four-year education plan for students.

--parent night to explain graduation requirements, college entrance requirements, and course-selection questions.

--individual conferences upon request with students and parents

First semester tenth grade

--classroom visit to encourage participation in PSAT testing to prompt students to actively begin the college-search process. Information on how to conduct a college search is distributed.

--individual conferences upon request with parents and students.

Second semester tenth grade

--classroom visit to update four-year educational plans and elaborate on resources to aid in college-search process. At this time graduation credit checks were distributed and transcripts checked for accuracy.

--newsletter on college and curriculum planning and curriculum guides were distributed to students.

--college conferences with college representatives were held at school.

--individual conferences upon request with students and

parents.

--small group conferences with students on interpreting their PSAT scores and how to use these results in the college-search process and for future testing success.

First semester junior year

--classroom visit to encourage participation in PSAT testing and to encourage additional college-search activities of students.

--college night activity promoted through announcements and material distributed on how students should approach this experience.

--after-school conferences with students and parents on how to choose a college and how to find money for college.

--parent night on course selection and college-planning information.

--articles submitted to parent newsletter published and mailed home each six weeks and to the school newspaper on various topics concerning the college-search process. Parents are encouraged to plan college visits with their student.

--individual conferences upon request with students and parents.

Second semester junior year

--small group interpretation and discussion of PSAT scores, distribution of The College Times to students, and tour of

guidance resource room.

--classroom visits to update four-year educational plans, review transcripts, distribute SAT and ACT application materials, and review college-search plans. Financial aid information distributed.

--individual conferences with each student on course selection for senior year and review college plans.

--college conferences scheduled with college representatives at school.

--individual conferences upon request with students and parents.

First semester senior year

--students were furnished with college applications or information on how to procure them.

--students were assisted with completion of college applications.

--individual conferences upon request with students and parents to finalize plans.

--senior handbook distributed with specific information on many phases of the college-selection and application process.

--evening lecture and information session for parents and students with college consultant Frank Rugg, author of Rugg's Recommendations on the Colleges.

--college conferences with college representatives at school.

--college night promoted through announcements and materials distributed on how students should approach this experience.

Data Collection

The questionnaire was administered by the evalauator to the students in the Advanced Placement classes during class time. The questionnaire directions were reviewed with the students by the evaluator. Students were advised that they could omit their names in order to insure confidentiality of their responses. Completion time was approximately ten minutes.

Analysis of the Data

To examine the responses to the survey instrument measures of distribution, central tendency, and variation were used. Percentages showing the frequency of response were used to rank order those items most commonly identified as quite helpful and extremely helpful. Means and standard deviations for each of the individual items were computed. Means were determined by averaging frequency of responses for each selectable answer. Point values were used as appears on the selection scale (0-5).

CHAPTER IV

Results of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the most helpful resources provided by the high school counselor to students making a decision concerning which college to attend. In addition, information on the satisfaction of the students in the study with the services of the counselor and guidance resources was sought. A questionnaire was administered to seniors just prior to graduation in which they were asked to rate the above mentioned resources and services.

Fifty-seven responses were collected overall. All questions were not answered by all students. Of the respondents, fifty percent indicated that they were female and fifty percent indicated being male. The senior class in total contained fifty-four percent female and forty-six percent male. Ethnic backgrounds of the students responding were eighty-five percent caucasian and fifteen percent African American. This compares exactly with the racial composition of the entire class.

The results indicated that ninety-one percent of the students (n=49) had used the counselor as a source of information about college choice. Of those seeking

information from the counselor, ninety percent (n=44) indicated ratings of satisfied, quite satisfied, and extremely satisfied. Seventy-one percent (n=35) expressing quite satisfied or extremely satisfied. Ten percent (n=5) indicated that they were either not satisfied or only somewhat satisfied.

Sixty-four percent of the students (n=34) had used the guidance reference room. Eighty-eight percent (n=30) of those reported satisfaction with fifty-six percent (n=19) indicating that they were quite or extremely satisfied.

These data indicate that although the counselor has many responsibilities, college bound students perceived that their needs in regards to the college-choice process are being supported helpfully by the counselor. These results are shown in Table 1.

		Did not use	Not satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	satisfied	Quite satisfied	Extremely satisfied
Guidance reference room	N	20	0	4	11	12	7
	%	37	0	7.4	20.4	22.2	13
Guidance counselor	N	5	2	3	9	19	16
	%	9.3	3.7	5.6	16.7	35.2	29.6

In Table 2 the results of the questionnaire were tabulated for questions 1-18. These questions dealt with the helpfulness of particular resources available for the students to use in making college choice decisions. The number of responses (n) and the percentage (%) of the total

TABLE 2 - STUDENT RESPONSES TO HELPFULNESS OF RESOURCES

	Did not use		Not helpful		Somewhat helpful		helpful		Quite helpful		Extremely helpful	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1.Self-evaluation techniques	10	28.1	3	5.3	7	12.3	15	26.3	9	15.7	7	12.3
2.Organization folder	25	43.9	0	0	10	17.5	6	10.5	12	21	4	7
3.College night	18	31.6	5	8.8	12	21.1	8	14	14	29.6	0	0
4.College visits	11	19.3	0	0	2	3.5	8	14	11	19.3	25	43.9
5.Catalogues and brochures	5	8.8	2	3.5	9	15.7	14	24.6	20	35.1	7	12.3
6.College guides and directories	11	19.6	1	1.8	7	12.5	15	26.8	16	28.6	7	10.7
7.College repres. conferences	19	33.3	0	0	6	10.5	10	17.5	16	28.1	6	10.5
8.Computer search	38	66.7	3	5.3	3	5.3	6	10.5	2	3.5	5	8.8
9.Other college info books	15	26.3	2	3.5	9	15.7	15	26.3	9	15.7	7	12.3
10.Videos on colleges	30	52.6	2	3.5	7	12.3	11	10.3	3	5.3	3	5.3
11.Video tapes on general college information	41	71.9	2	3.5	5	8.8	6	10.5	1	1.8	2	3.5
12.Financial Aid guides	22	38.6	1	1.8	9	15.7	8	14	9	15.7	8	14
13.Seminars on financial aid	37	64.9	1	1.8	5	8.8	6	10.5	6	10.5	2	3.5
14.Seminars on college decision making	39	70.9	4	7.3	2	3.6	6	10.9	2	3.6	2	3.6
15.Individual conf. with counselor	17	30.9	2	3.6	5	9	4	7.3	20	36.4	7	12.7
16.Classroom counselor presentation	24	44.4	0	0	7	13	12	21.8	9	16.7	2	3.7
17.Individual teacher conf.	43	78.2	2	3.6	3	5.4	6	10.9	1	1.8	0	0
18.Classroom teacher presentation	40	75.5	0	0	4	7.5	8	15.1	1	1.9	0	0

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number of responses for that resource are given. These are in the order that they were given on the questionnaire.

A different and perhaps more useful way to sort this data is presented in Table 3. Here the percentages for the ratings 1 through 5 are computed based on the total percentage of users instead of the total respondents. This gives a clearer idea of how those that used these resources considered their helpfulness.

TABLE 3
Helpfulness Ratings Based on Responses of Users

Resource	helpful		helpful		helpful		helpful		helpful		use	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1.Self-evaluation techniques	3	7.3	7	17	15	36.5	9	30	7	17	41	72
2.Organiz. folder	0	0	10	31	6	19	12	38	4	13	32	56
3.College night	5	13	12	31	8	20.5	14	36	0	0	39	68
4.College visits	0	0	2	4	8	17	11	24	25	54	46	81
5.Catalogues & brochures	2	4	9	17	14	27	20	38	7	13	52	91
6.College guides & directories	1	2	7	16	15	33	16	36	6	13	45	80
7.College repr. conf.	0	0	6	16	10	26	16	42	6	16	38	67
8.Computer search	3	16	3	16	6	32	2	11	5	26	19	33
9.Other college info books	2	5	9	21	15	36	9	21	7	17	42	74
10.Video tapes on colleges	2	8	7	27	11	42	3	12	3	12	26	46
11.Gen. college info videos	2	12	5	31	6	38	1	6	2	13	16	28
12. Financial aid guides	1	3	9	26	8	23	9	26	8	23	35	61
13.Financial aid seminars	1	5	5	25	6	30	6	30	2	10	20	35
14.Seminars on decision making	4	25	2	13	6	38	2	13	2	13	16	29
15.Indiv. conf. with counselor	2	5	5	13	4	11	20	53	7	18	38	69
16.Classroom couns. presentation	0	0	7	23	12	40	9	30	2	7	20	56
17.Indiv. conf. with teacher	2	17	3	25	6	50	1	8	0	0	12	22
18.Classroom teacher presentation	0	0	4	31	8	62	1	8	0	0	13	25

In Table 4 results were tabulated to determine the frequency of usage for the resources in question. The most used resources were college catalogues and brochures followed by college visits and college guides and directories such as The College Handbook published by The College Board and Peterson's Guide to Four Year Colleges. The least used resource was the classroom teacher.

TABLE 4 - FREQUENCY OF RESOURCE USAGE

Rank	Resource	N	%use	N	non %use
1	Catalogues	52	91	5	9
2	College visits	46	81	11	19
3	Guides & Directories	45	80	11	20
4	Other college info.	42	74	15	26
5	Self-evaluation	41	72	16	28
6	Indiv. conf w/ counselor	38	69	17	31
7	College night	39	68	18	32
8	College repr. conf.	38	67	19	33
9	Financial Aid Guides	35	61	22	39
10	Organizational folder	32	56	25	44
11	Classroom counselor	30	56	24	44
12	Video tapes on college	26	46	30	54
13	Seminar on Financial Aid	20	35	37	65
14	Computer search	19	33	28	67
15	Small group seminars	16	29	39	71
16	Videos, Gen college info	16	28	41	72
17	Classroom teacher present.	13	25	40	75
18	Indiv. teacher conf.	12	22	43	78

Table 5 represents a ranking by mean scores of those students who used the resources listed from most helpful to least helpful. The scale ranged from 5, extremely helpful to 1, not helpful.

TABLE 5

Perceived Helpfulness of Resouces Ranked by Mean Score

Rank	Mean	S.D.	Resource
1	4.28	0.90	College Visits
2	3.66	1.08	Individual Conferences with Counselor
3	3.58	0.94	Conference with College Representatives
4	3.42	0.98	College Guides and Directories
5	3.40	1.03	Cataloges and Brochures
6	3.40	1.18	Financial Aid Guides and Directories
7	3.31	1.04	Organization Folder
8	3.29	1.30	Self Evaluation Techniques
9	3.24	1.11	Other College Information Books
10	3.20	0.87	Classroom Presentations by Counselor
11	3.16	1.10	Computer Search
12	3.15	1.06	Seminar on Financial Aid
13	2.90	1.32	College Videos
14	2.79	1.07	College Night
15	2.77	0.66	Classroom Presentation by Teacher
16	2.75	1.14	Videos on General College Information
16	2.75	1.31	Seminar on College Decision Making
18	2.50	0.87	Individual Conferences with Teachers

Interestingly enough, individual conferences with a guidance counselor ranked number six in frequency of student use but number two on the helpfulness mean score scale. College cataloges were the most used resource but ranked number five in helpfulness. College night was ranked seventh in usage and number fourteen in helpfulness using mean scale

scores.

The data in Table 6 shows the percentages of students who used the resources and indicating that they were quite satisfied or extremely satisfied. The most helpful resources by a wide margin in regards to this measure were college visits (78%) and individual conferences with the counselor (71%). The third resource ranked by the percentage of students being quite or extremely satisfied was conferences with college representatives at fifty-eight percent, thirteen percentage points below individual conferences with the counselor and twenty percent below college visits.

Table 6

Percent of Student Users Rating Resources Quite or Extremely Helpful

Rank	% Indicating Quite or Extremely Helpful	Resource
1	78	College Visits
2	71	Individual Conference w/counselor
3	58	Conference w/College Representative
4	52	Cataloges and Brochures
5	49	College Guides and Directories
5	49	Financial Aid Guides and Directories
7	40	Seminar on Financial Aid
8	39	Self Evaluation Techniques
8	39	Organizational Folder
9	38	Other College Information Books
11	36	Computer Search
12	36	Classroom Presentations by Counselor
13	36	College Night
14	25	Seminar on College Decision Making
15	23	College Videos
16	19	General College Information Videos
17	8	Individual Teacher Conferences
18	7	Classroom Presentations by Teachers

The research questions for this study were two-fold. The first question focused on the perceived helpfulness of the resources and interventions provided by the high school counselor for the students at Leon High School in regards to the college choice process. The concern motivating this question was to identify and rank those resources which students use to facilitate the decision of college choice as well as to help the counselors determine which ones are most helpful to the students. It was found that college visits and individual conferences with the counselor were the top ranked resources for helpfulness followed by meetings with college representatives. The most used resources were college catalogs, college visits, and college guides and directories.

The second question directed itself to the satisfaction of students with the staff and resources provided by the school. A large majority of the students were satisfied with the counseling services provided. The counselor was used by over ninety percent of the students responding and all but a few indicated satisfaction with the services received. The guidance reference room was used by fewer students and again those students using this service were largely satisfied with the resources provided.

CHAPTER V

Summary and Discussion

This study was conducted to provide an evaluation of the resources and interventions provided by the guidance department and used by the college bound students of Leon High School to promote the students' decisions on college choice. It was also devised to evaluate the students' perception of satisfaction regarding the overall provision of services through the resources provided by the school and the counseling staff during the search stage of the college choice process. This is the stage where most students seek the aid of the high school counselor.

The instrument employed in the study surveyed the respondents ratings on the usage and the helpfulness of various college information and decision making sources. In addition, the students were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with the guidance reference room and the guidance counselor. An analysis of the student responses to the instrument have provided the basis for the findings upon which the following conclusions and recommendations were derived.

Findings

1. A large majority of the students (91%) at Leon High School seek the assistance of a counselor while in the search stage of the college-choice process.
2. A substantial number of the students (90%) enlisting the aid of a counselor are satisfied or more than satisfied with the assistance received.
3. More students used the guidance counselor than took the initiative to use the guidance reference room while involved in the college choice process.
4. All the students using the guidance reference room were at least somewhat satisfied, with a large percentage (64.8%) indicating being more than satisfied with the resources provided.
5. The resources most often used by the students in the college search process are not necessarily the ones found to be most helpful. College cataloges and brochures were indicated to be the most used resources whereas the helpfulness ranking was much less.
6. Newer technological tools for counseling such as computer searches amd video presentations were neither used frequently or ranked highly on the helpfulness factor.
7. Classroom teachers were ranked low in terms of student

usage (22%) and on the helpfulness factor.

8. Few students used or found helpful the small group seminars on financial aid and college decision-making. The financial aid seminars were ranked higher than the decision making seminars in terms of helpfulness, with fourty-five percent of those attending ranking them either quite or extremely helpful.
9. College visits are one of the most important factors which students use to make the decision on which college to attend.

Conclusions and Discussion

Extent of Counselor Involvement in College-Choice Decisions

Based on the previously stated findings of this study, certain conclusions concerning the usage and helpfulness of resources and interventions provided high school students to enhance and support the college-selection process can be derived.

According to the review of the literature it was determined that choosing the college which one intends to receive the educational foundation, which will determine future career directions, is a decision of great inportance to the decision maker. It is a decision which many students

turn to the high school counselor for advice, information, and direction during the search phase of this process (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). Since over ninety percent of the students in this study responded as having used the services provided by a high school counselor, it is extremely important that counselors understand the significance of their role in facilitating this important decision. According to the counselors responsibilities in the college-choice process of students outlined by Reiss and Fox (1967), concentrated efforts should be employed to accentuate the counselors' knowledge, availability, and support from the school system in regards to the various aspects of this function of their job.

Counseling case loads should be examined and kept to a level which can be reasonably assisted. Recommendations by the Carnegie Foundation (1987) suggest that the ratio of students to counselors be far less than most high schools currently demonstrate.

Many students seek the help of their high school counselor for advice and information on college choices. It is important that counselors have a broad and current knowledge base in this area. Counselors need to be encouraged and funded to attend seminars hosted by colleges, admissions associations, and the college testing services to maintain accurate and timely information on the various

colleges, their offerings, the campus climates, admissions policies, means of meeting college costs, employment trends, and other issues related to the transition from high school to college.

Counselor education programs in the universities should include more preparation for future and practicing counselors in the area of college and career advising.

The respondents in this study indicated a far greater satisfaction level with guidance services than was indicated in the literature to expect (Engen, Laing, & Sawyer, 1988).

Sources of Information and the College Choice Process

Along with the expertise of the counselor, students also need the information which can be gained through various media channels. Many high school students use the resources provided by the guidance office to gain insights and answers to compare and contrast choice possibilities, and to receive direction in the college-search journey. The counselor should act as a guide and teacher in this process. Students should be made aware of the resources available and how to employ these resources in their search. It is also important for the students to have ready access to these resources. The reference room at Leon High School has limited accessibility to students and may account for the finding

that it was used by only eighty percent of the student respondents. Concentrated efforts should be initiated by the guidance staff to insure accessibility of the reference room for student usage. The administration needs to be fully informed as to the necessity of student access to these materials.

The rather limited use of the videos and computer search opportunities may be attributable to the fact that these resources were added to the reference room late in the respondents junior year. Although these results did not differ from what was previously found by Matthay (1989).

Counselors need to realize the value of current and comprehensive reference materials related to the college-selection process and throughly familiarize themselves on the contents and applicability of such. Students and parents need to be informed of the resources available through various means and encouraged to make use of the facility. The facility should be advertised and made available for use both during and after school. Since students are normally very busy during the school year, they and their parents should be encouraged to use these services during the summer months.

If counselors were employed during the summer hiatus, time could be afforded to attend conferences, visit college campuses, work with parents and students under less pressure,

and help students with program planning.

A large majority of the students responding to the questionnaire noted using college generated materials such as cataloges and brochures. There is a comprehensive collection of these materials in the guidance reference room and many students will receive these materials in the mail after participating in the PSAT testing. These materials were not found to be as helpful as other sources of information used by the students. Problems with these publications offering the kind of information sought by the students, and the students inability to comprehend the vocabulary or reading level of these materials were mentioned in the literature review (Chapman & Johnson, 1979). Counselors should be aware of these problems and take measures to help the students contend with this situation. Students should be introduced to the college vocabulary early in the college-search process. Counselors need to make available to students a glossary of terms used in the college literature to edify the understanding of what is being read. Counselors should make an effort to collaborate with college admissions offices to help devise more understandable literature which more closely addresses the information students are seeking from these publications.

Counselors are becoming better aware of the advantages of new methods of dispersing information and helping students

learn of more ways to help themselves. The use of the computer in college advising is a relatively new tool and time is needed to gain familiarity with its benefits. Students are often more adept and less intimidated by computers than are the counselors. Counselors must make every effort to learn the advantages of computer applications in assisting students with the college-search process and encourage more students to pursue the use of computer assisted guidance systems.

To further enhance the use and effectiveness of the college selection resources, the use of guidance paraprofessionals and parents could provide additional support to the counselors as well as to the students. A well trained paraprofessional assigned to the guidance resource facility could focus on helping students find the appropriate resources to facilitate their search. Parent volunteers could likewise be trained to assist in the resource room, helping to maintain current files and assisting students in using the resources. This parental involvement could also serve another purpose by helping to spread the word to other parents as they network with each other while their children are involved in the college-choice process. Informed parents talking to other parents is a form of peer counseling that counselors may often overlook.

Teacher Involvement in the College-Choice Process

The results of this study indicate infrequent involvement on the part of classroom teachers with the college-choice process of students. Teachers interact with students on a daily basis and therefore would logically be in a position to be very helpful in assisting students with college selection. This is an overlooked resource into which counselors may not have put enough energy. Reiss and Fox (1967) addressed the counselors responsibility to help other staff members enlarge their knowledge of the college-selection needs of students and to become involved in curriculum development to meet the needs of students. One important need of students is in the area of facilitating the college-choice process.

Teachers are a resource which could allow counselors to disseminate information, stimulate student decision-making, and promote more responsibility in the college-choice process of students. By engaging other staff members in this process, the counselor's effectiveness could be enhanced. Teachers should be encouraged by the counselor and the administration to become more involved in the college-selection activities of the students, to learn more about the options available for students on the postsecondary level, to take a more involved role with student decision-making, and

to incorporate college decision making into the curriculum. This strategy could considerably ease the burden currently borne mostly by the counselor. Counselors should strive to raise the consciousness level of teachers in regards to the importance of successful college choices by students and how important their role can be in facilitating the students' ability to make propitious college selections.

Group Counseling and College Choice

Small group seminars were found by this study to be a helpful resource, but one not often used by students. Reaching more students by means of group counseling could serve several purposes. Counselors could reach more students with less expenditure of time and in addition, students can be of help to each other in a group setting.

The Value of College Visits in College Selection

College visits stand out in this study as the most influencing factor in aiding the student's selection of a college. Matthay (1988), Boyer (1987), and the Carnegie Foundation (1986) all indicated the importance of the college visit in helping students decide on the college they will attend. Counselors should strive to incorporate this finding

into the services offered students in as comprehensive a fashion as feasible. Students should be encouraged to begin college visits early in their search process. Counselors can provide direction on how to approach a college visit to gain maximum information from the experience. Visits to nearby campuses could be arranged by the counselor for student exposure to the college visit resource. These visits could allow the counselor to model for the students how to approach the college visit and provide the students with examples for comparison with other colleges. Longer range visits or tours to colleges farther away may be organized during holiday breaks or summer vacations by the counselor for interested students.

Implications for Future Research

This study was limited to a single high school with a middle income population located in a small city. To gain more comprehensive conclusions on the topics covered in this study, future studies could be conducted to include more types of schools and with differing populations.

Further research should be implemented as a follow up to this study. Treatment groups focusing on computer applications and with specially involved teachers would give data on the benefits of involving these resources into the

college choice process of students.

Due to the possible hardships caused students by inappropriate college choices, future studies focusing on the factors which initiated these faulty decisions could furnish valuable information which could be employed by all persons involved with assisting the decision maker.

Colleges expend a good deal of effort and large sums of money on the publications sent to prospective students. In the future research should be conducted to analyze the type of written materials which will enable better decision making by students involved in a college search. The reading level and the vocabulary should be studied to insure readibility and comprehension by targeted populations.

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APPENDIX

INSTRUMENTS

NAME_____ SEX_____ RACE_____

Rate the following resources used in making your decision about the colleges to which you applied.
Circle the number that best describes how helpful you found this activity or resource. Circle 0 if you did not use the item in question.

	Did not use	Not Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Helpful	Quite Helpful	Extremely Helpful
1. Self evaluation techniques	0	1	2	3	4	5
2. Organization Folder	0	1	2	3	4	5
3. College Night	0	1	2	3	4	5
4. College Visits	0	1	2	3	4	5
5. Catalogues and Brochures	0	1	2	3	4	5
6. College Guides and Directories	0	1	2	3	4	5
7. College Rep. Conferences	0	1	2	3	4	5
8. Computer Search	0	1	2	3	4	5
9. Other College Information Books	0	1	2	3	4	5
10. Video Tapes on Colleges	0	1	2	3	4	5
11. Video tapes on General College Information	0	1	2	3	4	5
12. Guides and Directories on Financial Aide	0	1	2	3	4	5
13. Seminar on Financial Aide	0	1	2	3	4	5

14. Small Group Seminars on College Decision Making	0	1	2	3	4	5
15. Individual Conferences With Counselor	0	1	2	3	4	5
16. Classroom Counselor Presentation	0	1	2	3	4	5
17. Individual Teachers Conference	0	1	2	3	4	5
18. Classroom Teacher Presentation	0	1	2	3	4	5
19. Other Sources Please List						

Answer the following questions using the rating scales provided. Circle the number that best describes how satisfied you were with the resources or services in question.

	Did not use	Not satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Satisfied	Quite satisfied	Extremely satisfied
1. Guidance Reference Room	0	1	2	3	4	5
2. Guidance Counselor	0	1	2	3	4	5